

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to address the Business & Professional Women USA luncheon. It is a pleasure to be among leaders who are dedicated to important women's issues like Family and Medical Leave, equal pay and something very important to me - The HEART For Women Act.

Many of you have traveled far distances, away from your homes and your families, to talk with Members of Congress about ways to improve the lives of women and build on our years of advancing women's rights in the workplace. But heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases are critically important *health* issues that also deserve national attention as important *women's* issues. These diseases combined, remain the Number 1 cause of death of all American women, taking the life of one female nearly every minute. I appreciate the importance that Business and Professional Women USA has placed on this key health issue and I am eager to tell you all about legislation that will decrease the burden of heart disease in women, which coupled with stroke, will claim the lives of nearly half a million women in America in 2008; This is more than all deaths from breast, cervical and lung cancers combined. While breast cancer kills thousands of women every year, statistics show that one in three, or 30 percent of women die from heart disease, while one in 25, or four percent of women die from breast cancer.

Let me ask, how many of you were aware that 50,000 more women than men were killed by cardiovascular diseases in 2004? How many of you knew that women are one and a half times more likely than men to be readmitted to the hospital for complications after heart bypass surgery? A new study shows that while in young men under age 45, the heart disease death rate is declining; the rate in young women has actually increased, and is now at its highest level since 1987. Ladies, we cannot idly sit back and allow more of us to become part of these statistics, so to address heart disease mortality and these significant disparities between men and women, Senator Stabenow and I have introduced The HEART for Women Act.

Our legislation, the HEART for Women Act, does three things: First, it provides the public with better information about safe and effective treatments for women by requiring drug safety information to be stratified by sex, race and ethnicity. This information will help doctors, researchers and patients better understand why certain treatments work ~~better~~ in men than in women. Second, this legislation expands the WISEWOMAN program that provides free heart disease and stroke prevention screening to low-income, uninsured women. This program has been incredibly successful throughout the U.S. – 3 out of 4 women screened by this program had at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke. The HEART for Women Act also raises awareness

among healthcare providers about the risk for heart disease and stroke. A 2004 survey found that less than 20 percent of physicians were aware that more women than men die each year from cardiovascular diseases.

After all this, I do have *some* good news to share with you – a USA Today article from January 2008 points out that heart disease deaths rates fell among women by almost 27 percent between 1999 and 2005, however researchers estimate that epidemics of diabetes and obesity could threaten these gains.

I want to again thank each of you for your coming to Washington to meet with professional women from around the nation, and to talk about the issues that matter to us. Heart and cardiovascular diseases are critical issues for women and one that must be addressed. When you meet with your Senators and Representatives, share these statistics with them, tell them all the female Senators have signed on to the HEART for Women Act and ask for their support for a critically important women's health issue.

Again, many thanks to the Business & Professional Women USA for making women's heart health the focus of today's luncheon.